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# TELEPHONE CONTACT WITH VA: NUMBER OF CONTACTS AND QUALITY OF INFORMATION RECEIVED

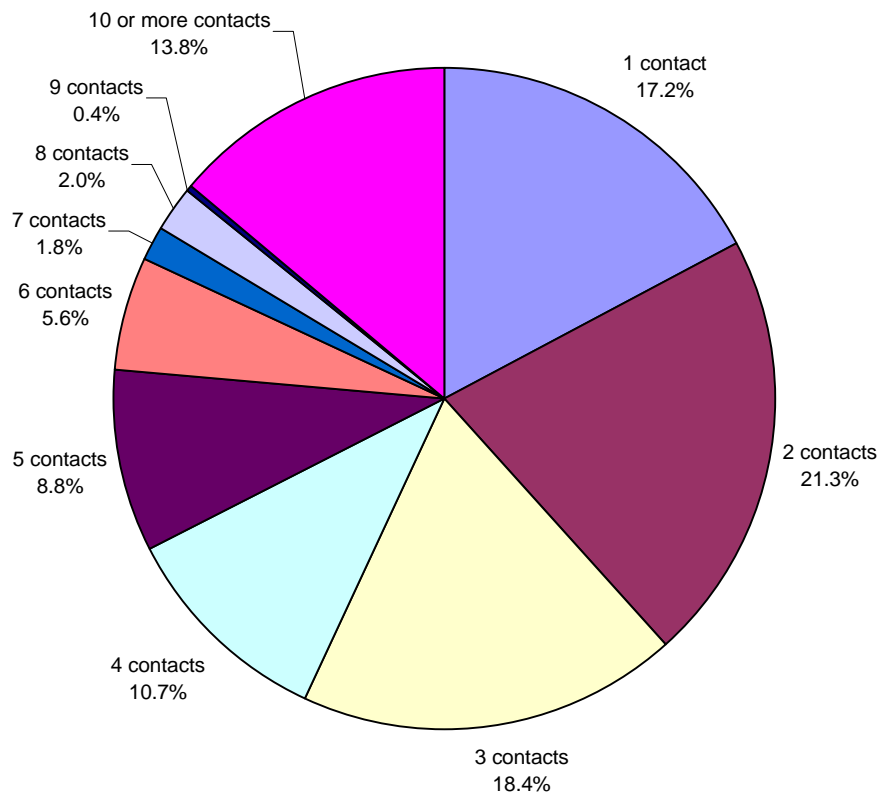
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Data from the 1997 Survey of Veterans' Satisfaction With the VA Compensation and Pension Process paint an interesting picture of telephone contact with VA. **Of those who had any C&P-related telephone contact with VA, an overwhelming majority reported speaking with a VA employee on the phone on more than one occasion. Of those who got through to VA on the telephone for a C&P-related issue, more than one-quarter received little or none of the information they needed, and almost one-third said they were not able to receive information about their particular claim.**

## Number of Contacts

Chart 1 shows that only 17.2 percent of veterans with a pending or complete C&P claim had only one telephone contact with VA. *This means that over 80.0 percent reported having multiple contacts with VA over the phone.*

**Chart 1: Distribution of the Number of Telephone Contacts With VA**



Questions or comments can be directed to:  
Lynne Heltman ([ORMLHELT@VBA.VA.GOV](mailto:ORMLHELT@VBA.VA.GOV))

Surveys and Research Staff (245)  
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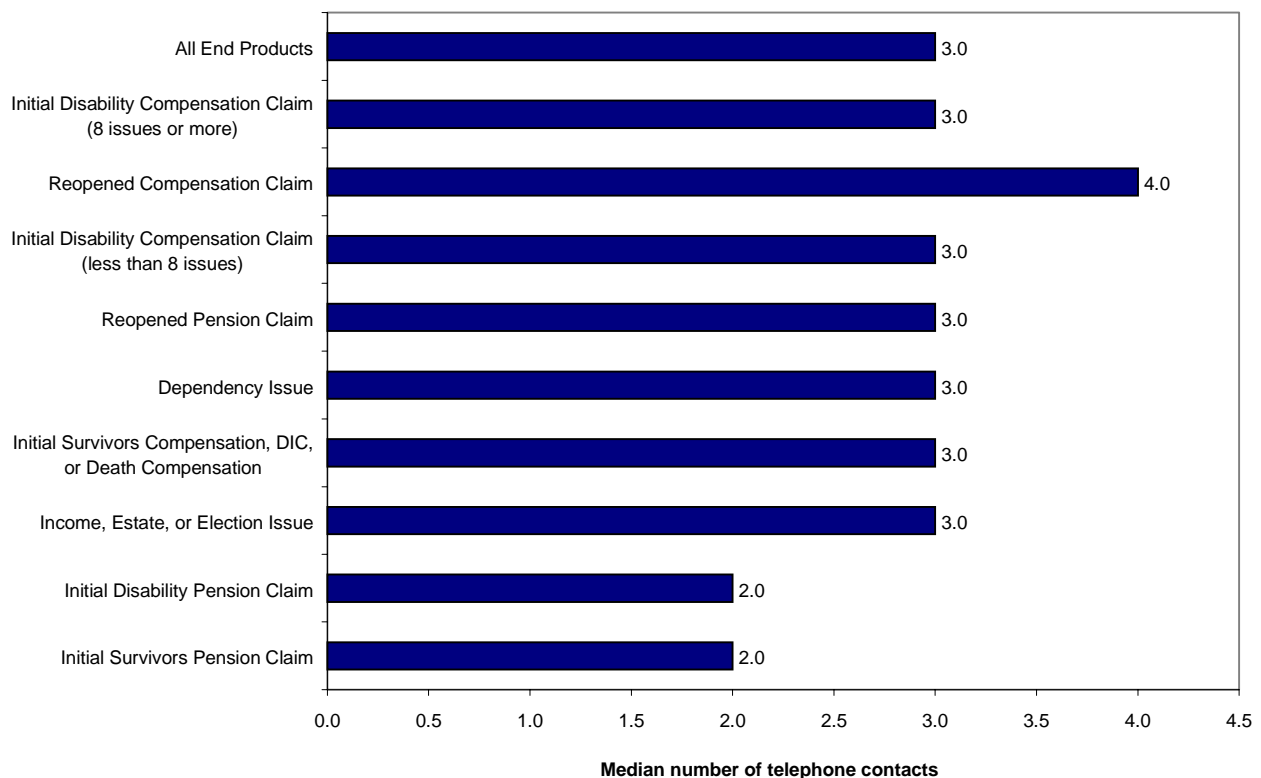
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Chart 2 displays the median number of telephone contacts these veterans had with VA, overall and within each of the nine surveyed end products. *Considering all end products and all regional offices, veterans with a pending or completed C&P claim contacted VA via telephone a median of 3 times.*

Veterans contacting VA regarding a reopened compensation claim (020) reported a median of 4 telephone contacts with VA, while veterans with initial survivor or initial disability pension claims (180 or 190) reported a median of 2 telephone contacts.

**Chart 2: Median Number of Telephone Contacts, Overall and by End Product**



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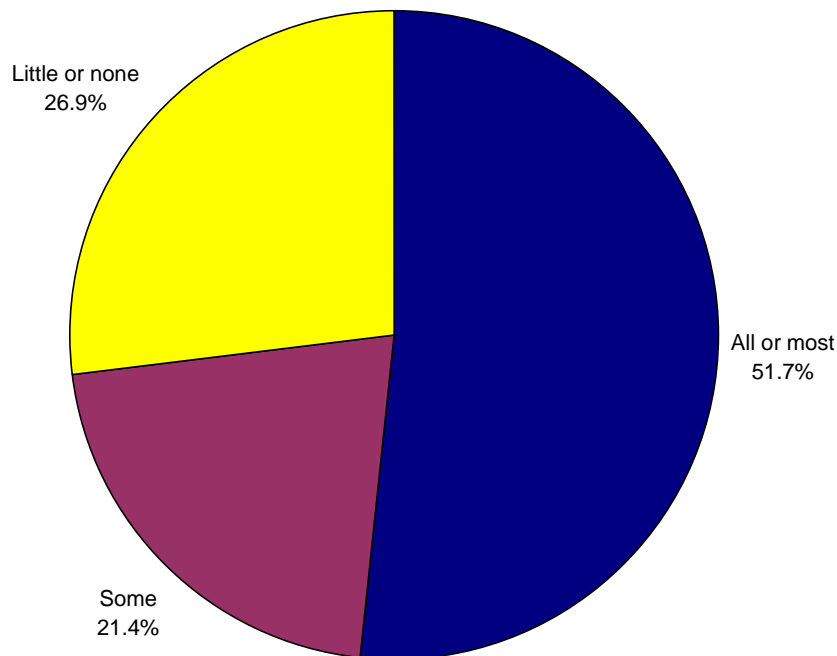
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## Quality of Information

Veterans do not call VA on the phone just to see if their call can get through. They call to get information, frequently that which is specific to their particular claim (almost two-thirds of surveyed veterans reported calling to check on the status of their claim). Data show, however, that a sizable percentage of the veterans who telephoned VA with a question about their C&P claim were unable to get the information they needed.

Chart 3 shows that only about half of all veterans who telephoned VA with a C&P-related question got all or most of what they needed to know from that telephone contact. *A full 26.9 percent said the telephone contact yielded little or none of the information they needed.*

**Chart 3: How Much of What You Needed to Know Did You Get From Your Telephone Contact With VA?**



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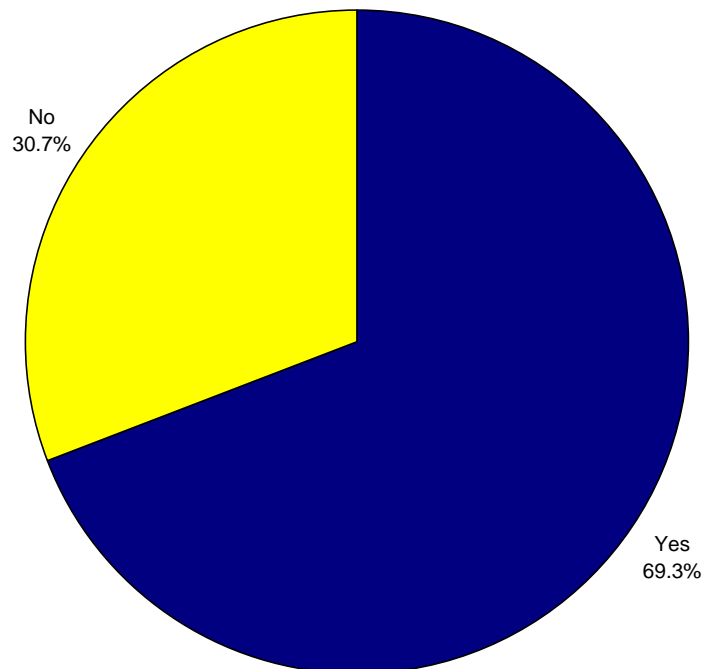
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Veterans who called VA to get information specific to their particular C&P claim also faced obstacles. *Nearly one-third of the callers who got through to a VA office over the phone and needed information about their claim said VA employees were unable to give them information specific to their particular claim.*

**Chart 4: Were VA Employees Able to Give You Information About Your Particular Claim Over the Phone?**



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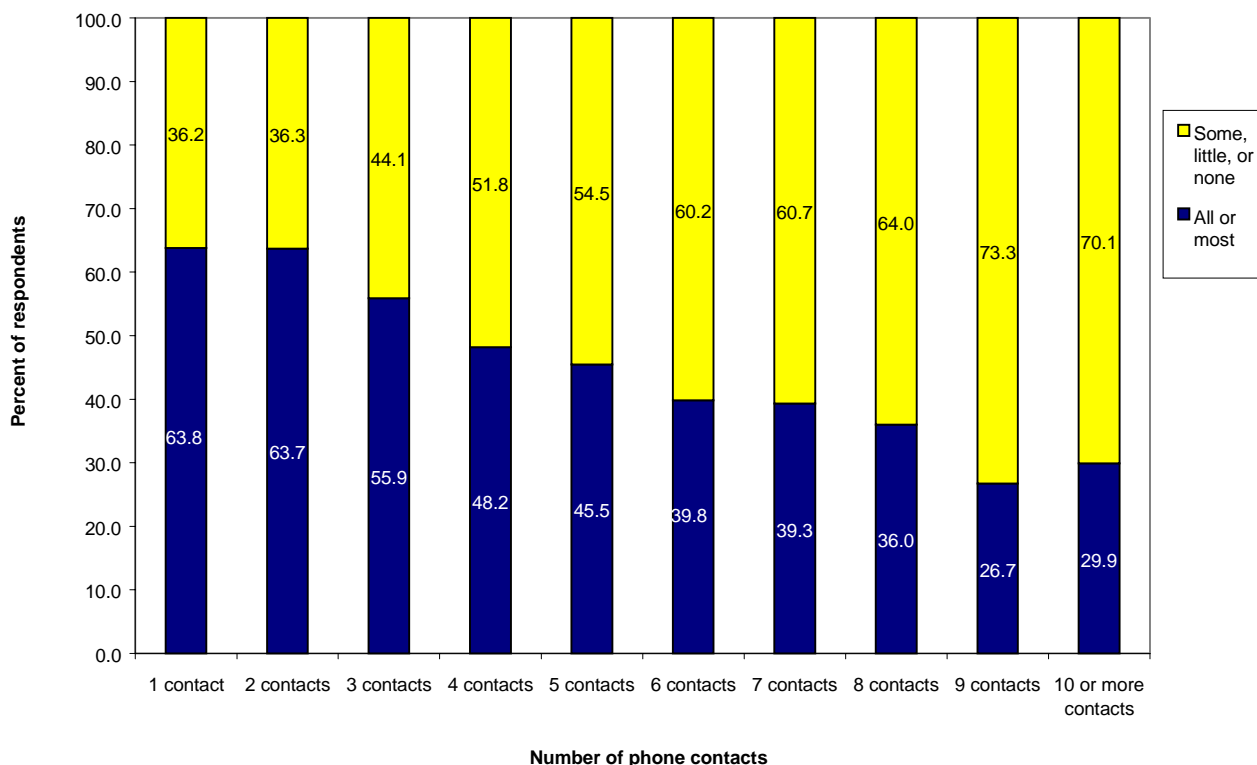
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## How Does the Number of Telephone Contacts Relate With the Quality or Amount of Information Received Over the Telephone?

Chart 5 shows that *more calls to VA do not yield more information for the veteran. The more telephone contacts a veteran has with VA, the less likely she/he is to report getting all or most of the information she/he needed.*

Those who reported only one or two telephone contacts with VA were the most likely to say they got all or most of the information they needed. *But even among these "most satisfied" individuals, more than one-third reported getting only some, little, or none of what they needed.*

Chart 5: Amount of Information Received Over the Phone by the Number of Phone Contacts



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## Summary

These data show that getting through to VA on the phone is only the first step in the process of providing quality customer service. If a veteran cannot get the information she/he needs over the telephone, just being able to get through does little good.

The blocked call rate, which measures the percent of phone calls that could not get through to VA, says nothing about the amount of information received by veterans once they got through to VA. It also does not get to the root of the problem. The ability to provide quality information may actually *preclude* additional calls, lessening call traffic.

Although these data cannot show the exact percent of all calls, it is clear that a considerable portion of calls are made by the same individual, rather than each call being made by different individuals. The goal should be to give quality information to each individual at the time of contact and to proactively notify veterans of changes in a claim status in order to lessen the need for multiple contacts on the same claim.

Data from the *1997 Survey of Veterans' Satisfaction With the VA Compensation and Pension Process* show that veterans are less than satisfied with the quality and amount of information they receive over the telephone. ***In order to effectively manage VBA, communication with the veteran from the veteran's perspective should be taken into consideration.***

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